

YES, MA'AM!

By Steve Cox

CAP elects first female national commander



Photos by Susan Robertson, CAP National Headquarters

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Allen G. Peck, left, commander of Air University, and Civil Air Patrol Cadet Col. Elizabeth Dumont, chairman of the CAP National Cadet Advisory Council, change out the shoulder boards for Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter. As Civil Air Patrol's national commander, Courter now wears two stars on her uniform.

Civil Air Patrol's first female national commander, Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter, is a familiar face to the organization's 56,000 members, thanks to her long CAP career and a full year of on-the-job training as interim national commander. "We have made tremendous progress by fostering an environment of open communication and collaboration, increasing transparency, improving accountability and setting a plan for our future," said Courter in her campaign address presented on Aug. 7 during the 2008 Civil Air Patrol National Board meeting held at the Gaylord Palms Resort in Kissimmee, Fla.

"Much of this we did together," she said, "following vectors I believed would take CAP in the right direction."

Following her speech, Courter was unanimously elected national commander by CAP's National Board, the organization's governing body. She was promoted to major general two days later in a rousing ceremony held during the National Board's annual conference banquet. Col. Reggie Chitwood, who was elected national vice commander, was promoted to brigadier general.

Courter's primary duty as national commander over the next three years is to lead CAP's volunteers in fulfillment of the organization's three congressionally chartered missions: emergency services, cadet programs and aerospace education, as well as CAP's increasing role in America's homeland security. The national commander is a member of both the CAP Board of Governors and CAP National Board — the organization's

CAP elects Chitwood national vice commander

Brig. Gen. Reggie Chitwood of Van Buren, Ark., is the Civil Air Patrol's new national vice commander.

"I can think of no greater honor than to serve the volunteers of the Civil Air Patrol as the national vice commander," said Chitwood. "As national vice commander, I will partner with, and fully support, the national commander to enhance the professionalism and integrity of the Civil Air Patrol."

Before his election, Chitwood, a member since 1991, was CAP's sitting national chief of staff, responsible for directing and overseeing the organization's national staff and advisers. He previously served as commander of CAP's Southwest Region and Arkansas Wing.

"I believe in the Civil Air Patrol," said Chitwood. "I believe in its volunteers and its missions, and I believe what we do makes a difference in our communities and to our nation."



Shortly after their promotions, Courter, left, poses for a photo with Brig. Gen. Reggie Chitwood, CAP's new national vice commander.

governing bodies.

Being Civil Air Patrol's national commander is a natural fit for Courter, a South Lyon, Mich., native who joined the organization in 1979 as a Michigan Wing cadet.

Courter served as commander of the Michigan Wing from 1999 to 2002 and as the senior adviser to the CAP National Cadet Advisory Council. In addition, she served as chairwoman of the CAP Professional Development Committee.

As Michigan Wing commander, Courter focused on membership retention, funding, training and aircraft utilization. Under her leadership, the wing received all four of the Great Lakes Region's national program awards. She was founder and commander of the Michigan Wing Legislative Squadron, and Michigan became the second wing in the nation to have all congressional legislators join CAP. She also helped found and has directed the nationally recognized CAP Civic Leadership Academy, which gives cadets an in-depth, hands-on understanding of government.

Former National Commander Maj. Gen. Richard L. Bowling, who was inducted into the CAP Hall of Honor during the board's 2008 banquet, said he met Courter when she was a senior member attending National Staff College at CAP National Headquarters. Bowling, who served as CAP's national commander from 2001 to 2004, said Courter asked for an American flag to start a

color guard. "That night, I noticed something in a young woman," said Bowling, who eventually honored her request. "We're going to put a different flag in her hand tonight and it has two stars on it," he said, prior to her assumption of command as a two-star major general.

The historical significance of Courter's promotion to national commander was not lost on the more than 500 members attending the banquet. Cadet Chief Master Sgt. Tiffany Jakowczuk, who attended as a member of the national color guard championship team from the Florida Wing's Gainesville Composite Squadron, said participating in the banquet and watching Courter take command was "definitely pretty cool."

"It shows that females can step up," said Jakowczuk.

Courter, meanwhile, took her promotion in stride.

"It is my honor and privilege to serve you as national commander," she said. "I look forward to the difference we will make — together."

She challenged members to be bold and to seize the opportunities that await Civil Air Patrol.

"There is a quote that I cherish and I would like to share it with you now, as I believe it embodies the spirit with which we will succeed," she said. "'The Great Frontier today is the exploration of the human potential, man's seemingly limitless ability to adapt, to grow, to invent his own destiny.' There is much to learn, but we already know this. The future need not happen to us. We can make it happen." ▲